CROYDON PHILATELIC SOCIETY:

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 9 JULY 2019.

President **Graham Harker** opened the proceedings at 19.00 hours and welcomed the 14 members present for the **"Tin Can Mail of Niuafo'ou"** display by **John Davis.**

Apparently there are over 100 different ways of delivering mail, most of which were short lived. However the **Tin Can Mail of Niuafo'ou** which includes **Tin Can Canoe Mail** lasted over 100 years from 1882 to 1983. Niuafo'ou is a tiny island in the Pacific which is part of the Kingdom of Tonga and has a population of around 650. It is actually the peak of an active volcano with no harbour and ships have to anchor 2/3 miles from the shore and use smaller boats or canoes to reach the island. In 1882 William Travers packed mail into 40 gallon tins and swam out to passing ships for the first time. Charles Rawley made over 100 swimming deliveries to liners with mail mainly addressed to the USA, Australasia and Great Britain.

Three frames showed the world-wide interest in Tin Can Mail with correspondence to and from world wide destinations including hand painted covers, reply paid cards to Peru and cachets such as “Damaged by salt water in Tonga”. Some cruise ships designed their own covers and these were well represented. The service continued throughout World War 2 and there were examples of delayed mail, such as one from the island to Paraguay which took two years to get there. Air-graphs began in 1943 and one of only two known from England to Niuafo'ou was displayed.

In 1946 the volcano erupted and the island was evacuated and evacuation covers from this period were shown. Tin can mail did not resume until 1962 and continued until an airfield was built in 1983 and then the 100 year old service came to an end.

John Ray gave the vote of thanks for an absolutely remarkable display showing a great depth including many unique and special items deserving the highest of praise. Members expressed universal approval after viewing the displays. The meeting came to a close at 21.00 hours.

Brian Asquith/Graham Harker
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